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Panther Sports News

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Feb. 21, 1983
LS-AS-Wrestling

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's wrestling Panthers, clicking with four straight dual meet wins over Big Ten and Big Eight foes, appear primed for competition in the NCAA West Regional Saturday and Sunday (Feb. 26-27) at Cedar Falls, IA.

EIU, 6-3 in dual meets, will likely take a full ten-man contingent to the first step towards the national tournament. The Panthers were second in the region and 19th in the nation last year.

Slightly less than 20 teams are expected to have at least one competitor in this meet, says Coach Ron Clinton. Northern Iowa, the host school and ranked in the top ten nationally, is the favorite followed by Cal Poly/SLO and EIU.

The top three in each weight class plus two wild cards will advance to the national finals on March 10-12 at Oklahoma City. Most qualifiers advance through conference tournaments but the Panthers are wrestling as an independent since scheduling conflicts prohibited a Mid-Continent meet.

Eastern has handily defeated three Big Ten teams, Illinois, Purdue and Indiana, plus Missouri of the Big Eight, in recent weeks giving the appearance of peaking at the right time.

There are three returnees who qualified for last year's finals, Derek Porter (Titusville, FL-Mims), an All-American finishing 8th at 126, Mark Gronowski (Titusville, FL) at 167, and Dennis McCormick (Springfield) at 177.

"It will be tougher this time," says Clinton, "because they are having just two regionals and Cal Poly/SLO is in ours . . . it's a quality meet.

"But we have been wrestling well of late, and beating teams from the Big Ten and Big Eight will help prepare us for this competition."

Porter and Gronowski are the leaders with 28-4 and 28-5 records, respectively, while McCormick is at 13-5.

-more-

EIU WRESTLING
ADD 1

"Duane Clark (Shellrock, IA/Waldorf CC) has been coming along at heavyweight and Jeff Dillman (Joliet-West) has given us good matches at 190. He's won 11 of 12 since Christmas . . . and Bernie Ruettiger (Joliet-Providence) has done well in the big meets," Clinton said.

Clark's record is 15-5, Dillman is 19-5 and Ruettiger is 6-5-3, including a tie with the No. 1 ranked wrestler from Missouri two weeks ago, at 134 lbs.

The rest of the starting lineup will be either ~~freshmen~~ Pat Flynn (Crystal Lake-Round Lake) or Robert Warren (Roxana) at 118, either Bob Ryan (Wooddale-Fenton) or Tom Gerdes (Oak Forest) at 142 and/or 150, and Dan Sanko (Ingleside-Grant) at 158.